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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ABU DHABI 001401

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ARP, INR/NESA, AND S/CT - H. CRUMPTON
NSC FOR FRAN TOWNSEND, JUAN ZARATE, MIKE TAYLOR, NICOLE
SHAMPAINE, NIK RAMCHAND, ELLIOTT ABRAMS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [EPET](#) [MCAP](#) [KPAL](#) [AE](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR HOMELAND SECURITY AND

COUNTERTERRORISM ADVISOR TOWNSEND'S VISIT TO THE UAE

REF: A. 05 ABU DHABI 3243

[B](#). 05 ABU DHABI 3565

[C](#). ABU DHABI 409

[D](#). ABU DHABI 779

[E](#). ABU DHABI 1228

[F](#). ABU DHABI 248 (NOTAL)

[G](#). ABU DHABI 176

[H](#). ABU DHABI 605

[I](#). USDEL 00007

[J](#). ABU DHABI 1123

[K](#). ABU DHABI 909 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) Summary. Embassy Abu Dhabi looks forward to welcoming you to the UAE on April 23. In the aftermath of the controversy of the Dubai Ports World acquisition of P&O, your assurances to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ), your host for the visit, that the USG values the UAE as an ally and friend will be well received. While you should commend the UAE for its assistance and cooperation, you should take advantage of your luncheon with MbZ and his brother, State Security Director Sheikh Hazza, to push the UAE on several areas of interest to the USG: counterterrorism, counter terror finance, Iran, Hamas, Iraq, and ideological extremism (each is covered in the scenesetter). The UAE remains a committed partner in the global war on terror, but it continues to take an ad hoc approach to countering terrorism that "solves" the problem for the UAE locally, but fails to contribute on a transnational basis. In January, the U.S. and the UAE held the first meeting of the Joint Terrorist Finance Coordinating Committee (JTFFCC), but the discussions were not as detailed or as robust as the U.S. delegation anticipated. Treasury U/S Levey will return to the UAE to hold a second meeting April 30 that will focus on cash couriers and charities.

[2](#). (S) Although the UAE regards Iran as one of its most serious threats to national security, UAE officials are reluctant to take actions that could anger their neighbor and compromise their extensive trading relationship. At the same time, we are seeing more of a willingness on the part of the UAE to support USG initiatives without the full approval of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). As tensions escalate between Iran and the international community, the UAE is growing increasingly nervous. The UAE leadership--which has told us they consider Hamas a terrorist organization--plans to uphold its previous commitments of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. The UAE has taken an active role in encouraging Sunni participation in the Iraqi political process and it continues to condemn the sectarian violence that is preventing stabilization of the country. In the face of growing ideological extremism in the Gulf, the UAE leadership is politically determined not to allow Islamist extremists to gain a foothold on UAE soil. End Summary.

Counterterrorism Efforts

[3](#). (S) The UAE is concerned about the terrorist threat to the UAE, but lacks a comprehensive implementation strategy for reducing its vulnerability (ref A). The UAE considers homeland security one of its top priorities, but rather than prioritizing national security projects, its efforts have focused on contracting risk assessments, forming committees, and procuring equipment. The UAE has also aggressively tried to prevent the radicalization of UAE nationals and Arab/South Asian expatriates. UAE officials publicly and strongly condemn extremism and terrorist attacks, anti-extremism has been the focus of government-approved Friday sermons in the mosques, and the UAE ministry of Education has modernized the Islamic studies curriculum in its schools.

[4](#). (S) The UAEG government reacts quickly when presented with evidence of a terrorist presence inside the UAE, but does not approach the problem from a transnational manner. The UAE's immediate response when terrorists pose a risk is to deport them. UAE agencies do not investigate fully to see how far the problem goes or whether there is an international network

involved. Although the U.S./UAE counterterrorism cooperation is strong (with the UAE working closely with the USG on specific cases), Emiratis do not consistently share lead information found in the possession of individuals in their custody with each other or with the U.S. Government. These tactics limit law enforcement and intelligence services' ability to use intelligence to disrupt extremist cells and planned attacks. The UAE's insistence on deportation as a solution does not protect the country long-term or truly address the nature and scope of the problem. The UAE must be willing to take action against Emirati nationals, it must investigate fully, and it must share information with other Gulf countries and with the USG.

15. (S) The only way to generate significant change in the UAE on the issue of counterterrorism is to convince the senior leadership that it needs to continue to display political will and commitment in tackling the terror challenge with a transnational approach. MbZ is the person most able to elicit this type of change. Embassy recommends you have a frank and forthright discussion during your meeting with MbZ and his younger brother, Hazza, to encourage this type of change. Although you should commend them for the UAE's CT efforts and cooperation, you should also encourage them to be personally involved in developing a more effective and fully cooperative counterterrorism posture.

Counterterrorism Finance

16. (S) The UAE has made significant strides in regulating the financial sector against money laundering and terrorist financing (ref B). Although the UAE now has a strong legal framework in place, it must turn its efforts to enforcement. It is imperative that UAE authorities investigate and prosecute violators of terror finance/anti-money laundering, cash courier, and charity laws and regulations. To date, investigation and prosecution has been weak. In an effort to increase U.S. and UAE cooperation on terrorist financing, the first meeting of the U.S./UAE Joint Terrorist Finance Coordinating Committee (JTFFCC) was held in Abu Dhabi on January 24, 2005 (ref C). The UAE team had representatives from the Central Bank, State Security, Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Justice. However, no one participated from Dubai. In order for the JTFFCC to be an effective committee, Dubai's Police, State Security, Customs, and the Department of Islamic Affairs and Charities must participate. Embassy is coordinating a second meeting April 30 that will focus on cash couriers and charity regulations.

Iran

17. (S/NF) UAE leaders are very concerned about escalating tensions between Iran and the international community. The UAE feels vulnerable--as evidenced by the fact that its leaders frequently note that Iran is "very near" the UAE. Commercial ties between Dubai and Iran are significant (Dubai is Iran's largest non-oil trading partner), and as a result the UAE walks a fine line between maintaining and encouraging this trade and working to prevent suspected Iranian proliferation activities. Although the UAE is worried about Iran's nuclear ambitions, its short-term policy decisions regarding Iran center on not provoking its neighbor. The USG has approached the UAE four times since January, asking it to interdict and inspect cargo suspected of going to Iran's nuclear and/or missile programs. None of those instances have resulted in a successful interdiction. In the first two instances UAE officials simply refused to take action (refs F and G). The Director of Dubai's State Security Organization explained during the 11 February U.S./UAE Counterproliferation Task Force meeting that the decision to not inspect the containers had been a political decision based on the UAE's concern that Iran might retaliate (ref H). In the two later instances (ref K), ships that had been scheduled to arrive in Dubai went directly to Bandar Abbas.

18. (S) In recent meetings with senior USG officials, MbZ has expressed clear support for U.S. initiatives against Iran. MbZ and UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid agreed with Secretary Rice February 23 about the need to counter Iran's growing influence in the region and its nuclear ambitions, although they specified that any sanctions should target the key Iranian leadership, not the Iranian people (ref I). MbZ told A/S Welch March 28 that he did not think it was necessary to wait for all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to agree before proceeding with any plans against Iran (ref E). "Whoever is interested in getting on board ship should be encouraged," he said. "I don't think it's logical or smart to wait for everyone to get involved so we can sail. ... If another GCC member believes it's not right, that's his choice." In the Arab region, MbZ specifically identified Bahrain and Jordan as two countries that also view Iran as a threat and that are "capable to work with us." He told A/S Welch that the UAE

would prepare a paper responding to USG concerns about Iran and mechanisms for addressing the challenge posed by Iran. In a March 27 meeting with CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid, MbZ spoke about the Iranian threat with a greater sense of urgency. He was strongly in favor of taking action against Iran and its president sooner rather than later. "I believe this guy is going to take us to war. ... It's a matter of time," MbZ warned, adding that action against Iran and President Ahmedinejad should be taken this year or next year. MbZ said he was unwilling to wait much longer. "Personally, I cannot risk it with a guy like Ahmedinejad. He is young and aggressive."

19. (S/NF) SSD Director Hazza told A/S Welch March 29 that the Ayatollah Ali Khomeini had once issued a fatwa prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons by Iran, but noted that this should not be considered a guarantee. Hazza assessed that Iran is also a threat due to its ties to international terrorist organizations, including al-Qaida, as well as their financial support to Hamas. He added that the relationship between Iran and Syria, and their links to Hizballah, was also of concern, as was Iran's attempts to expand its influence in Iraq and elsewhere in the world. MbZ also expressed to A/S Welch March 28 the concern that Hizballah was supporting Hamas. During your meeting, you should explain the graduated approach to addressing Iran in the United Nations Security Council and encourage the UAE to isolate Iran--regardless of potential economic backlash. You should also explain the importance of the UAE working closely with the USG on interdiction requests. This meeting will be a good follow-on to the discussion U/S Joseph had with Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan (AbZ) on April 8, where Joseph outlined the USG's policy priorities for Iran (septel). (Note: While AbZ, like MbZ, expressed support for U.S. initiatives against Iran, he stated that the USG should come to the UAE as a "very last resort. ... If you can solve something without involving the UAE, please do so." End Note.)

Palestinian Territories/Hamas -----

10. (S) UAE leaders have told us that they consider Hamas a terrorist organization and that they would not fund Hamas unless they denounce violence (refs D and E). However, after Hamas political chief Khaled Meshaal visited Abu Dhabi on March 22 and met with UAE Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed al-Sha'ali, Meshaal publicly claimed that the UAE had pledged to continue to provide financial assistance to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (ref J). MbZ told A/S Welch March 28 that the UAE allowed Meshaal to come, but that "officially, we don't recognize Khaled Meshaal." MbZ said that once a new Palestinian Prime Minister is selected, UAE officials will travel to the Palestinian territories to ascertain that UAE assistance is "going to the right people." UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid sounded a note of optimism when he told Secretary Rice February 23 that Hamas, "with some pressure," would understand the need to respect the will of the international community.

11. (S) The UAE has historically provided significant financial assistance to the Palestinian people. Typically, the UAE sends aid to the Palestinian territories through charity organizations, or by projectized assistance; but the UAE has also provided financial assistance directly to the Palestinian Authority, most recently \$20 million in March 2006 to Mahmoud Abbas for salaries. In the wake of the Hamas electoral victory, UAE leaders told us they intend to honor their previous commitments of humanitarian assistance (including the \$100 million Sheikh Khalifa housing complex that was announced last year).

12. (S/NF) In his meeting with A/S Welch March 29, SSD Director Hazza assessed that there was both a positive and a negative side to the Hamas election win. On the negative side, he cited Hamas' position with regard to Israel, and their violent agenda. On the positive side, Hazza noted the fact that Hamas was now in power and was accountable to the international community. He spoke to A/S Welch of the threat posed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Hazza also asked A/S Welch how the USG would react to those countries that did support the Hamas government, and whether they would run afoul of U.S. laws restricting support to terrorist organizations. A/S Welch replied that that would be a problem, emphasizing that no money should go to the government unless Hamas renounced violence and accepted Israel. A/S Welch also told Hazza that it was not the responsibility of the U.S. or other Arab countries to pay the salaries of the new Hamas government, underscoring the need for Hamas to show accountability. MbZ told A/S Welch that Hamas benefited from "official and private contributions" from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. MbZ said it was "easy to take \$1 million in a suitcase" to Lebanon, alluding to cash couriers.

Iraq

113. (S/NF) A partner in the war on terror, the UAE continues to provide U.S. forces access, overflight clearances, and other critical logistical assistance to Operation Iraqi Freedom (and Operation Enduring Freedom). The UAE has also been a helpful supporter of Iraq's burgeoning political process. It has worked with Iraqi political and religious figures to encourage greater Sunni integration, and it has consulted with Ambassador Khalilzad on a number of occasions about the need to stem sectarianism in Iraq. The UAE has publicly condemned acts of sectarian and terrorist violence in Iraq, most recently, the February 22 bombing of the al-Askariya Shrine. MbZ and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid expressed their concerns about Iran's interference in Iraq's internal affairs to Secretary Rice during her visit to Abu Dhabi February 23. MbZ further told General Abizaid that discontent with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari was creating volunteers for al-Qaida. He pledged the UAE's support to the fight against al-Qaida. In his meeting with A/S Welch, MbZ advocated using the Arabic language media to tell Iraqis the truth about how many of their own people are dying at the hands of the insurgents. If Iraqis were to see the figures, he opined, they would conclude that support of the insurgency is "not worth it."

Ideological Extremism

114. (S) MbZ and his brothers continue to be outspoken on the issue of Muslim extremists and the threat they pose to the region. MbZ underscored for A/S Welch the UAE's preferred approach of denying extremists a foothold rather than allowing them to play a role in the political process. Although he warns of the dangers of free elections in countries with a well-organized Muslim Brotherhood presence, he tells USG guests that the UAE will go ahead with elections. The Emirati leadership has told us that they will not allow Islamists to participate in elections. (Note: The UAE has announced that half of the members of the Federal National Council would be elected while half would continue to be appointed by the rulers of the various emirates. Despite this announcement, the UAE still lags behind other Gulf states in terms of democratization. End Note.) MbZ also sees extremist ideology threatening the educational system, where he and his brothers are spending considerable resources to modernize the curriculum and the teaching corps. SISON